



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
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EARL RAY TOMBLIN  
GOVERNOR

February 13, 2013

Mr. L. Wade Linger, President  
West Virginia Board of Education  
Capitol Building 6, Room 351  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0330

Dear President Linger:

The Constitution of West Virginia places great importance on public education. It is in the best interest of the all our citizens, especially our students, for the various branches and agencies of State government to work cooperatively toward making our public education system the best it can be.

Toward that goal, I will present to the Legislature a program that is designed to address needed improvements in our system to improve our students' academic achievement. Much of it stems from recommendations in the Education Efficiency Audit, as augmented by responses from many individuals and groups in our State, including the West Virginia Board of Education.

While developing my education agenda, it became clear to me that there are a number of ways to implement the various elements. A common approach is for the Governor to call for legislation and work with the Legislature to gain passage. That approach is appropriate in many situations and for many subject matters. However, I believe there also are areas where the Board of Education, acting pursuant to its power of general supervision, can - and should - take a leadership role. Therefore, I am asking you to discuss the proposals below and provide a response regarding your willingness to implement these items while working cooperatively with both my office and the Legislature:

1. Teacher Certification for Elementary Teachers - I believe that reading on grade level by the end of the third grade is a critical stage in a student's life and we must do all that we can to assure every child is successful. I am specifically requesting that the Board use its authority to certify teacher education programs and teachers, as well as its direction of professional development programs, to assure that every elementary teacher is prepared to assist all our students in reading at grade level by the end of the third grade.

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2. In your response to the Education Efficiency Audit, you indicated a need to establish a commission to review the current governance structure of having 55 separate county boards of education and all the administrative costs that necessitates. I am requesting that the Board formally undertake that study.
3. The Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA's) were established in part to create efficiencies among the 55 county boards of education. Since the creation of the RESA's, their role in the system of public education has grown, but that role has not been well defined over time. In its response to the Education Efficiency Audit, the Board recognized a need to utilize the RESA's more effectively, especially in the following areas: (1) creating efficiencies among the local school boards; and (2) utilizing RESA's to decentralize the delivery of services to our schools, moving away from a top-down method of State delivery to a system that is more local and regional. I agree with these and other goals the Board has established for the RESA's and I specifically am requesting the Board aggressively pursue this agenda.
4. A major theme of my education agenda is ensuring our high school graduates are prepared for a career. To make that possible for our students, they must understand the career options available to them at an earlier point in their education. It is vital they have the knowledge of what must be achieved to qualify for those options. A potential resource for providing that information is our community and technical college staff. The concept of public education and our community and technical college systems coordinating staff in cross-counseling efforts is one that makes sense for both systems and our students. I am asking you to pursue this option for providing our students with more information about the availability of and demands for potential careers.
5. For many years the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) has been a valuable resource for West Virginia. I have a long association with SREB and always have found their research and reports of great value. In our attempt to improve the career readiness of our students, SREB has provided a valuable tool in their Preparation for Tomorrow program. This program seeks to establish at least one high-quality career pathway program that meets the Preparation for Tomorrow key elements for quality. The goal of the program is for "Students to master complex academic and technical concepts and graduate ready for as many options as possible in the workplace, technical colleges or universities." This is exactly what West Virginia needs. It is my understanding that our state has developed a career pathway in the area of Energy, Power and Engineered Systems that meets the SREB key elements. I am asking that the Board of Education require every career center in West Virginia to adopt or develop at least one career pathway that meets the SREB quality standards for Preparation for Tomorrow. Some may already have programs that meet these high standards. But those without should adopt one as soon as possible. All students should have access to pathways of recognized high quality, and these new quality pathways can serve as guides for reinvigorating our current programs. Ultimately, every program should meet these high standards.

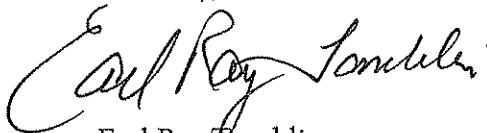
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6. Technology provides our system with the potential to personalize and enhance the education of all our students. From the days of our Basic Skills Program in the early 1990's, West Virginia has been a leader in many areas of education technology. But recent advances in software, hardware, and particularly the internet, have opened opportunities we only could have imagined even a few years ago. While I believe technology can enhance our future, we must be cautious how we proceed. The cost associated with these new tools is substantial, and the cost of "getting it wrong" is even higher. Fortunately, former Governor Bob Wise, who heads the Alliance for Excellent Education, has developed a tool called Project 24 that is designed to help us get it right. Project 24 provides "systemic planning around the effective use of technology and digital learning to achieve the goal of 'career and college readiness' for all students." I am committed for West Virginia to continue to be a leader in education technology, but I also am committed to doing it right and at a reasonable cost. I am requesting that the Board investigate Project 24 and advise me how our State can take advantage of this planning approach. I want to move forward with the new tools and approaches that will bring personalized learning to our teachers and students, but I also want to be certain our approach is planned and efficient.

The Education Audit made several fiscal efficiency findings targeted at providing a high return on educational expenditures. Continued consideration of these findings is an important part of identifying available funds to be reallocated towards our mutual educational goals that increase student achievement. I simply ask that the Board, which oversees the management and day-to-day operations of the department, continue to focus on ways we can become more efficient and look forward to learning of the continued progress you make in these considerations.

I ask that the Board provide me their response to these requests. It is my goal to strengthen the working relationship between my office and the Board, and to help provide the coordination needed for my office, the Board, and the Legislature to more efficiently and effectively provide the leadership our education system needs and deserves. Feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Earl Ray Tomblin  
Governor

cc: Hon. Jeff Kessler, President, State Senate  
Hon. Rick Thompson, Speaker, House of Delegates  
Hon. Bob Plymale, Chair, Senate Education  
Hon. Mary Poling, Chair, House Education